

Message Text

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15

ACTION SR-02

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 ORM-03 SS-20 NSC-07

CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3797

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 5096

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS : SREF, IS

SUBJECT : SOVIET IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

REF: TEL AVIV 4180

1. DEDICATION CEREMONY FOR REFUGEE HOUSING COMPLEX AT ASHDOD WAS HELD ON SEP. 4. PROJECT CONSISTS OF 176 UNITS FINANCED BY \$3.5 MILLION FROM U.S. GRANT. CEREMONY CONCLUDED WITH UNVEILING OF PLAQUE SET IN BOULDER IN GARDEN.

2. CEREMONY, WHICH INCLUDED PLAYING OF TWO NATIONAL ANTHEMS BY A GEORGIAN BAND AND PERFORMANCE BY GEORGIAN DANCERS, WAS CENTERED AROUND SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR KEATING. REMARKS WERE ALSO MADE BY PINHAS SAPIR, CHAIRMAN OF JEWISH AGENCY (AND FORMER MINISTER OF FINANCE); MAX FISHER, CHAIRMAN OF JEWISH AGENCY'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS; AVRAHAM OFER, MINISTER OF HOUSING; AND ZVI ZILKER, MAYOR OF ASHDOD. LOUIS WIESNER, DIRECTOR, ORM AND MELVIN DUBINSKY, CHAIRMAN, UNITED ISRAEL APPEAL, WERE INTRODUCED.

3. DEDICATION WAS ATTENDED BY SOME 400 PERSONS, MOSTLY RECENT IMMIGRANTS FROM SOVIET UNION WHO RESIDE IN PROJECT. A SMALL BUT DETERMINED AND NOISY GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS, APPARENTLY IMMIGRANTS FROM GEORGIAN REGION, DISPLAYED UNCLASSIFIED

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BANNERS IN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND PRESSED PETITION ON JEWISH

AGENCY OFFICIALS PRESENT TO PROTEST THEIR ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES, PARTICULARLY HEAVY TAXATION. CEREMONY ITSELF WAS NOT INTERFERRED WITH, ALTHOUGH IT WAS CURTAILED SOMEWHAT BECAUSE OF CONCERN THAT DEMONSTRATION MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND.

4. IN PRESS COVERAGE, DAVAR HEADLINED: "GEORGIANS TO U.S. AMBASSADOR: SEND US BACK TO THE USSR; AMBASSADOR: GOOD THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE." ACCOMPANYING ARTICLE REPORTED THAT CEREMONY WAS DISTURBED BY GEORGIAN IMMIGRANT DEMONSTRATORS MANY OF WHOM CAME FROM ELSEWHERE IN ISRAEL. ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTED FACT THAT WHILE MOST ISRAELI SPEAKERS MADE NO MENTION OF THEM, AMBASSADOR KEATING IN HIS REMARKS EMPHASIZED THAT IN FREE ISRAELI SOCIETY NEW IMMIGRANTS COULD DEMONSTRATE AND EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS. ARTICLE CONTINUED THAT THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE WAS CALM AND ATTRIBUTED DEMONSTRATION IN PART TO CONFLICT OVER LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL COMMUNITY.

5. JERUSALEM POST IN ARTICLE ENTITLED "NEW FLATS FOR IMMIGRANTS AT ASHDOD" REPORTED THAT "CEREMONY WAS MARRED BY A SMALL GROUP OF GEORGIAN IMMIGRANTS COMPLAINING ABOUT HEAVY TAXATION." ONE BANNER WAS TRANSLATED "WE DON'T NEED PROPAGANDA, RETURN US TO THE USSR," ANOTHER READ "OUT OF THE IL600 WE EARN, WE PAY IL400."

VELIOTES

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